DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 209 926 FL 012 636

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TITLE Avoidance Ruled Out by Similarity.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 45p.; Paper presented at the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (Omaha, NE, April 9-11, 1981). Faint print.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Interference (Language); Language Processing; *Language Typology; *Learning Processes; Psycholinguistics; Second Language Instruction; *Second Language Learning

ABSTRACT

Avoidance as a strategy for error-free production in a second language is shown to be unavailable to the student when the second language is linguistically similar to the native language. In avoidance, the student "steers around" those aspects of the grammar of the target language with which he/she is unfamiliar. By restricting linguistic production to those aspects of the language over which he/she has mastery, the student attempts to avoid all errors. However, in attempting to communicate an idea in a second language similar to his/her native language, the student will be forced to rely on that similarity in choosing a mode of expression within his/her grasp; the possibility that the successful execution of that mode will differ in the target language from the native language entails risk for the student, who is likely to make a phonological, morphological, or syntactic error. Moreover, the similarity between the two languages provides, through conceptual proximity, alternative pathways to error-free production. The coexistence of hazardous (learning-inhibiting) and secure (learning-enhancing) spheres in the grammar of the second language indicates directions for learning strategy and teaching methods. The latter will involve a certain amount of drill and multisensory reinforcement. (JB)

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Avoidance Ruled Out by Similarity

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Introduction. The cognitive process associated with learning is still poorly understood, despite the efforts of behavioral scientists to uncover the mysterious ways in which human beings perceive, process and retain information. This uncertainty exists also with respect to the different factors and variables which affect the acquisition of a language, particularly when the student's task is aggravated by the fact that he already has competence in one linguistic system and must overcome its interference when attempting to learn the novel elements and processes utilized by a second language. Research has shown that in such a situation the student, being aware of the complexity of such an assignment, will engage not only in practices ensuring comprehension and retention of the second language input, but will also resort to inventing special strategies designed to remove the linguistic and psychological barriers encountered in the

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productive phases of the learning effort. (Cf., for example, Wong-Fillmore, 1976.)

One of the more ingenious albeit not at first noticeable or easily discoverable ways of achieving error-free production is "avoidance"--or the tactic which has been suggested to be included in the repertoire of the cognitive tools utilized by students of English as a second language in their attempts to generate grammatically correct utterances in the target language (Schachter, J.,1974; Swain, 1975; Perkins & Larsen-Freeman, 1975). It has been pointed out that while students may try to avoid the lexical units and the morphological or syntactic operations that are "different" from the equivalent ones available to them in the grammar of their own language, such avoidance implies competence to produce the crucial constructions, and the ability to exercise free choice--to avoid them or not--on the part of the learner (Kleinmann, 1978).

That the opportunity for recognizing the troublesome con-

trasting areas, and of being ready to deal with them, does not exist when the target language is closely related to the native code has been shown (Louda, 1978). The resemblance found between two languages highly similar in form and meaning is inconsistent in occurrence; this condition produces a situation fraught with danger for the student. At a given point in the utterance, there is no indication that would serve as a clue with regard to the forthcoming incidence of an element or process that is identical with, similar to, or different from the corresponding one of the native tongue. The learner thus cannot predict when avoidance would be useful and, as a result, this special preventive measure against error is not a strategic device which can be employed by him.

This being the case, are there then other avenues open for exploration to the student involved in the learning paradigm characterized by high similarity between the source and the target language?

To answer this question, let us first consider the validity of the claim that avoidance is used as a tool in combatting interference

in general, at least insofar as the supporting evidence offered with respect to syntax and phonology is concerned (Kleinmann, ibid.; Schachter, ibid.). Let us pursue the matter further then by examining the nature of verbal similarity and of some phenomena observable in the learning process where it is a complicating factor; this to be done with the purpose in mind of illustrating the fact that the presence of similarity does rule out avoidance, and that other structurally and psychologically motivated strategies of the learner come into play when error-free production of the target language is the goal.

Evidence offered in support of avoidance. The data presented in support of the claim that avoidance is a strategy frequently utilized by second language student included the findings made in testing Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Persian, Spanish and Portuguese adult speakers, in the production of the English present progressive, passive, indirect object pronouns, infinitive complements and of relative clauses (Kleinmann, ibid., for the first four struc-

tures and Schachter, ibid. for the last). While the frequency of the relative clauses was measured by an examination of samples of free writing by students in the target language. The tasks designed to elicit the other four structures involved the student first in a multiple-choice answer comprehension test which was to prove that they did have the competence to produce the necessary grammatical operations. The subsequently applied procedure of stimulating the student to production consisted in the use of pictures (intended to elicit the passive and the present progressive) and of questions regarding a third person present during the experiment (posed by the examiner with the purpose of getting the students to say indirect object pronouns and to come up with infinitive complements). While the conclusions arrived at in these two investigations favored the claim that avoidance does exist, the psychological tests evaluating anxiety and self-confidence as felt by the students in the production of the key structures,

also adminstered in the latter testing situation, did not show a correlation with the incidence of errors committed by the members of the different background language groups.

In a single experiment, it is admittedly impossible to control all the variables important in the acquisition of a foreign language. Even if some of the more obvious external dimensions could be discounted, however, the empirical results offered as the proof for avoidance being one of the cognitive straws a student will cling to in the effort to bypass the syntactic hazards of the new linguistic system may not be entirely reliable if certain parameters of the empirical design are brought into focus. In particular, the assumption that the students' ability to comprehend the four key patterns proved that they had the competence to produce them (an assumption on which Kleinman's experiment was based) cannot be accepted without reservations. The unequal quality and timing in the perceptual and storage stages in verbal memory, as opposed to the retrieval and production components, has been pointed

out in the past. (Cf., for example, Adams, 1967.) That there is a time gap of about eight months between competence in recognition and comprehension vs. the ability to generate linguistic elements has been shown for first language acquisition (Lenneberg, 1967). The same temporal disparity exists for the second language student, with the relative ease being obvious in understanding a given word or structure of the target language, while producing it in a creative fashion is far more difficult (Gary, 1978). The fact then that students may be able to provide the correct answer in a multiple choice response task measuring their comprehension is not a guarantee that they can indeed generate the same pattern on their own in a communicative setting. Also, what I would call "pragmatic interference" of the native tongue could be suspected in the less frequent production of relative clauses evident in the compositions written by certain student groups. If a given process, such as relativization, is available but is a relatively rare phenomenon in the actual use of the first language, then its absence in the data could be due

to this fact, and not to avoidance. (As claimed by Schachter, ibid.)

Further, there is one condition which makes the learning situation exceptional, and its presence brings about results in the learner's interlanguage which show that a general claim cannot be made of avoidance functioning in foreign language acquisition. This special circumstance is the high formal, semantic and functional similarity usually existing between two sister languages not far removed on the branches of a family tree.

Similarity and its effects in verbal learning. Similarity is the one crucial principle of language which makes communication possible. It is the partial identity of form and meaning of the recurring linguistic units and processes that allows the symbolic interaction between speaker and hearer to take place. In the view of psychologists, similarity in general is a phenomenon full of mystery and challenge. The question of what it is that creates the impression of resemblance is one so difficult to answer that "few psychologists have been naive enough" to ask it (Attneave, 1950,

p. 516). The conditions favorable for the sensation of two objects, situations, events or ideas being similar frequently prevail, and yet recognition of similarity will fail to occur in the mind of the observer. Thus the difference between resemblance as a construct--i.e. potential similarity--and a phenomenon--i.e. when the feeling of similarity is actually experienced--must be considered.

That the criteria which determine the perception of similarity are not simply the physical attributes of the comparable concepts is obvious when the impression that the colors blue and green, for example, are closer to each other than blue and red, is taken into account. Also, in the perception of similarity of sound, the same melody played on different instruments is not recognized as such because of the acoustic properties resulting from the various renditions--since these are certainly not identical. There is indeed ample evidence that similarity perceived by the different senses is not a simple phenomenal experience, the incidence of which could be predicted by an unequivocal statement of directly related circum-

stances. (Cf., for example, Goldmeier, 1937; Vogt, 1972). The challenge present in the search for the substance of psychological similarity is all the more interesting because of the influence it has on virtually all the life events man must become aware of, try to understand and remember. Partial likeness of perceptually distinctive properties is a vitally important factor in all the processes of classification, memory storage, recognition and retrieval which go on constantly in the mind of a human being faced with the necessity to process information in the battle for survival.

Although similarity, as perceived in language, creates the bond of mutual intelligibility among the speakers of a language, the phenomenon has not been explained and its definition may be difficult to formulate. The criteria used in determining linguistic resemblance are language specific. For example, the distinguishing power given to a phonetic property in one language makes two members of a phonological opposition systematically different and

separate units of the phonological system. The two sounds are then felt to be dissimilar enough to differentiate meaning.(E.g. the phonological segments defined by aspiration or its absence in Hindi.) The same phonetic feature, on the other hand, if not decisive in the determination of the phonemes of a language, does not mark two sounds as distinct. These then are simply variants, which appear similar to the native speaker who is usually not even aware of any phonetic difference between them. (True, for example, of the aspirated and non-aspirated voiceless stops of English.)

A further factor complicating the clarification of the problem of verbal similarity is the incidence of some of the substantial characteristics , probably influential in the recognition of overall resemblance, in different components of the grammar. Formal closeness may or may not be matched by identity of meaning; that, in turn, may or may not be accompanied by an agreement in the functional role. In some instances of two corresponding grammatical processes, shared by two languages, while there may be identity

in the format of the operation itself, the context of application may differ. Perhaps because of these variable conditions under which similarity makes its presence known in verbal interaction, investigation of its substance by linguists has been carried out only indirectly. Partial identity of linguistic features and of systematic relations in language has served as the crucial parameter in the research and theoretical proposals regarding analogy, identical types of constituents in recurring linguistic patterns and of rules on transformations. The effect of similarity in the acquisition of a foreign language has been thought to be beneficial by most investigators of the structuralist mold (Lado, 1964; Fries, 1945; Barrutia, 1967). While similarity may be helpful in recognition and thus in comprehension (and as a native speaker of Czech who attempted to learn Russian, I can testify myself to its facilitating influence in reading and aural comprehension), recent work has shown that it is a force detrimental to learning when production is required (Louda, 1980). Due to the inconsistency with

which similar phenomena occur between two related languages, the difficulties experienced by the students in production are serious; they are also of an entirely different sort than those encountered during the learning effort by students whose first language is less similar to or completely dissimilar from the target.

Errors made in learning a more and less similar second language.

In an analysis of evidence illustrating both incorrect and error-free written work done by Czech university students studying Russian, then followed by a study of the same kind of phenomena generated by Americans learning the same target language, I found that the faulty as well as the mistake-proof structures and passages occurred in different parts of the grammar and to a different degree with the two groups of learners (Louda, 1978). In summary: The inconsistent occurrence of similar and different rules and elements--lexical, phonological, syntactic and pragmatic--confuses the student of the closely similar language, particularly as to the formal aspects of the target. Since the basic processes by which

functional needs are fulfilled are consistently the same between the two Slavic languages (for example, the function of a noun in the sentence being indicated by a case marker attached to the stem both in the source and the target language), the student's errors are systematic and predictable, made mostly with respect to the form of the pertinent markers only. On the other hand, the student whose native tongue differs from the target in the way a given function is expressed (e.g. the role of a noun in the sentence being marked by a preposition, rather than by an affix, as it may be in the target language) commits haphazard mistakes both as to grammatical purpose and the means by which it must be achieved.

In translation exercises and free composition, the typical errors committed by the students involved in the learning situation made more difficult by similarity are those of wrong categorization of a given lexical item (a verb or a noun). Each such word is marked by a phonological property of the final consonant of the

stem (such as palatalization), and therefore belongs to a particular class delimited by a certain pattern of morphological behavior. This class may be different in the target language from that to which the comparable item belongs in the source code. An error in the morphology, i.e. the subsequent attachment of incorrect markers appropriate to the contrasting conjugation or declension in the other language, is then the outcome of the original faux pas committed by the student. Certain important semantic criteria (such as gender and number) are not violated, however. (An example is the Russian noun /stol'/, [meaning "table"] whose Czech version is /stul/. The error consists in the attachment of the "hard" affix /-ev/ in the genitive plural, where the soft indicator of the same case for the same number and gender /-ej/ would have been correct. The right case, number and the masculine feature all have been preserved.) The student whose first language uses an entirely different approach to the symbolization of a functional objective than the target

code does, on the other hand, (such as prepositions and auxiliaries rather than affixes), is totally at a loss as to both the shape and role of the bound morphemes of the second language, and substitutes one for the other, paying no attention to the communicative purpose, and to the important semantic determiners not relevant in his own language (such as gender and number in case markers).(One example of such unmotivated mistakes has been found in the reflexes of the proper noun /Oleg/, [a man's name], where the feminine ending was attached to indicate the accusative case: */Olegu/).Or the student simply omits the suffix and uses the unmarked form if this is done by his own language.

The impossibility of avoidance in a similar second language. Avoidance is nowhere evident in the data, whether production is analyzed with the focus being on the lexicon, phonology (and morphology), or the syntax generated by students. Between the two closely related languages, a great majority of the vocabulary

items are formally similar and most morphological and syntactic processes are of the same type. Identity also exists with respect to the view adopted by the members of the two cultures as to the extra-linguistic reality which surrounds them. Due to the pervasive resemblance of the communicative needs and in the symbolic ways in which they must be expressed, avoidance cannot be practiced as an evasive maneuver by the language student if the meaning of the intended message is to be preserved. The difference of one distinctive feature (e.g. the palatal characteristic pointed out here earlier) in the final consonant of the base formative does not bring on avoidance of the word; it is used, it is classified as a member of an incorrect paradigmatic configuration and for this reason erroneous personal or case morphemes are affixed. Eighty percent and more of the members of a given lexical subset (e.g. masculine nouns) are highly similar in form and semantic content to their equivalents in the second language and thus a reasonably close paraphrase is impossible. The decision as to the presence or absence

of the crucial phonological feature must be made therefore and the issue cannot be sidestepped by the student. The confusing element lies in the fact that the value of the same decisive dimension may be the same in some--but not in all--instances in the two systems. (The final stem segment in the first person singular of the Russian verb /vzat'/ ["to take"], for example, is palatal: /voz'mu/; the same form of the equivalent Czech verb identical in meaning is /vezmu/--the palatal feature now is absent in /z/. In the verb /nesti/ ["to carry"], on the other hand, there is no difference in the final segment of the stem: Russian /nes-/ is identical with the Czech /nesu/; this agreement makes things easier if the student can remember the difference in stress placement: On the first syllable in Czech, on the second in Russian.) The student is often incapable of predicting these points of disparity and thus cannot attempt to circumvent them.While the impossibility of the learner avoiding the sounds which may be different and difficult to pronounce in the target language has been pointed

out even for source and target languages as disparate in structure as Japanese and English (Schachter, ibid.), it is obvious from the facts just discussed that avoidance by paraphrase is even less likely to occur in the phonology (and consequently the morphology) of a similar target language.

Turning now to the syntactic components in the grammars of the two closely related languages, do we find structural characteristics or conceptual and functional units that, because of interlingual contrasts between them, evoke the desire to by-pass them in the student? While there are some variations in the combinations of sentence constituents representing the basic syntactic patterns of the two similar languages, and in the operations by which they are transformed into more complex structures, such differences frequently are rather subtle in that they do not lie merely in the formal aspect of a symbolic process, but are conditioned by a distinction in the pragmatic laws which regulate it. In existential sentences, for example, the kernels are identical. While the copula

"be" is normally not needed in Russian, however, it must always join the subject with the complement noun or adjective in Czech. The error of providing this connecting link in the target language is very frequent, since the decision to be made by the student is complicated by 1) the formal and meaningful similarity of the words, 2) the near-identity of the syntactic pattern, 3) the fact that in the past tense the copula is indeed required in the target language and, last but certainly not least, the task is made more difficultby 4) the existence of other copula-like verbs in both languages whose usage is dictated by rules inconsistently similar. (This is true, for example, of the verbs /javlat'sja/ in Russian and /jevit se/ in Czech ["to appear"], and also of /naxodit'sja/ in Russian and /naxazet se/ in Czech ["to be found"].) In the target system, these items serve as true linking verbs just as frequently as the copula does. Their native equivalents, however, are semantically more independent and do not take the place of the copula. The tendency for the student to join the subject to the complement

noun phrase by the copula /byt'/ stems then from the combined interference of the native language, where /byt/ is the favorite bridge in existential sentences, and from the competition of the pragmatic principles valid in the new code. The preferred use of the copula /byt/ in the source language, and the confusion caused by rules requiring the appearance of one of the several possible linking verbs in the second code--depending on which one of them is stylistically suitable--leads not only to misuse of the copula by the student when a linking verb would be preferable, but also to substitution of one linking verb for another, or to the use of a linking verb when /byt'/ is needed (Sourkova & Zajickova, 1968).

The mistake of inserting the copula when it shouldn't be is often accompanied by the wrong case being marked in the complement noun: the instrumental instead of the nominative. In the complement, /t/ is used more commonly in Czech in the indication of a profession, membership, etc. (As in: /On je uchitelem/ ("he is a teacher.") while the same sentence must be rendered in Russian as:

/On uchitel/). The important point to make here is, first, the lack of alternative structures reasonably close in meaning which the student could utilize if avoidance were on his mind. The second important consideration to bear in mind is the influence of pragmatic interference of the native language, in which the teleologically preferred construction is the subject noun phrase linked by "be"--and no other linking verb--to the complement noun phrase, which bears the surface mark of the instrumental case. (The closest possible paraphrase indicating someone's profession would be a gerund plus the complement noun phrase: "His profession is being a teacher", in Czech: /Jeho zaměstnani je byt uchitelem/ or a structure expressing the professional activity by a verb: "He teaches.", /On uchi/. Both of these paraphrases are semantically quite far from the original sentence and thus not likely to be said as a first choice by a speaker referring to someone's occupation.) The structure produced by the student may be inappropriate as to pragmatic context rather than grammatically, since in the case of

the various linking verbs, the nominative is not the only case to be used in the target language. The choice depends on fine distinctions of meaning and there is variation even among native speakers using the standard or the colloquial code. (Thus the incorrect use of the nominative instead of the instrumental after the verb /javlat'sja/ discussed earlier:*/On javlajetsja lishnij chelovek/, ("He seems to be a smart man."), where the instrumental /chelovekom/ is replaced by the student by the case which happens to be the appropriate one in his language after the same verb.)

The contention that the similarity existing between the source and the target system rules out avoidance as a strategy in learning is substantiated by written production evidencing the acquisition process even between two less similar languages.Some of the cognates found in the lexicons of Spanish and English, for example, have been known as "false friends". When there is formal resemblance but semantic disparity, the student has trouble remembering the

words in which such a difference occurs. The confusion does not arise because of the different meaning but because many other related lexical items do have not only the same shape but also the same semantic content. The inconsistency with which similar and dissimilar phenomena occur is the cause of the student's problem. At the same time, the crucial word is one most commonly used in both systems in a given communicative situation. The student cannot practice avoidance therefore for two reasons: First, because it is difficult for him to remember which cognates agree, and which do not, in meaning; thus the occurrence of the problematic ones cannot be anticipated. Second, there is really no viable alternative if the exact message is to be conveyed as planned, since the particular cognate is the preferred expression used in different circumstances in the two languages. (E.g. /asistir/ means to participate in a meeting or class in Spanish; /asist/ means to be of help in English. The alternative closest in meaning to the Spanish version might be /tomar/, semantically not the

best choice and not applicable to all the contexts in which /asistir/ may appear. The student does not avoid the cognate but erroneously selects the native formal version when the semantic setting calls for another word.

An error in the phonology may also here lead to one in the morphology. In lexical derivation (by the prefix /in-/, for example) both the prefix and the base formative are often identical in form and meaning in Spanish and English. A phonological rule (in this case, assimilation of the nasal to a following bilabial) which must be applied in English may not be a process which should be carried out in Spanish, however. The physical and meaningful resemblance of the morphemes induces the Spanish student of English to forget about its existence. The semantic role of the elements is so close that the derivation cannot be avoided--it is, in fact, accomplished and the result is a mistake. (E.g. */inmobile/ produced in English.)

Sometimes avoidance is a strategic device not accessible to

the learner of a similar language in the phonology, and the necessary confrontation with a "different" sound brings repercussions in the lexicon and orthography. In producing English words containing a distinctive segment not included in the German phonological inventory, for example, (such as the voiceless apico-dental fricative beginning the English adjective "thin") the student, side-tracked by the overall similarity of the new system with the first, must guess as to the pronunciation and spelling. (E.g. the result is *"clothe" for "clothes".) Also, the choice of an item from the "second" or functional lexicon, made under the pressure of the prevailing resemblance, frequently is executed with the native word as the psychologically dominant model and, as a result, the ensuing combination may appear akward, ever though intelligible, to the native speaker. (E.g.: "A house by the river" instead of "A house on the river".)

As is obvious from the preceding discussion, the student of a similar language has to meet the challenge of the "different"

structure or process head-on. He is well aware of the linguistic quicksand of the similar and yet, at times, formally distinct phenomena. He knows that the firm ground of the identity found in the different types of linguistic territory is interspersed with unstable spots of divergence. What is very hard for the learner to determine is the overall mapping of the formal features of each functional semantic area. In taking a step along the path to communication in the novel symbolic environment, the student cannot be sure of having remembered the exact dividing lines between the safe and the treacherous zones of the otherwise so familiar linguistic topography. Not being certain where the points of danger are located, the learner cannot be aware of them and cannot try to avoid them. The attempts to deal with the problem of this irregularity, and to speak or write the foreign language without falling into the traps of mistakes involve tactics which have the desired effect at times but which bring ill consequences on other occasions.

Strategies for error-free production. While the insecurity felt by the student with respect to the inconsistently similar grammatical elements and operations of the target language is shown then by errors, the comparatively "secure" subsystems in which formal, structural and semantic similarity may be found with some consistency provide the opportunity for the student to formulate utterances relatively free of error. If the two languages, in a given part of the grammar, choose to take a formally, functionally and semantically identical morpheme as the base in the derivation of all the members of a paradigm, and derive them by an identical process which also utilizes formally and functionally similar markers, correct forms are the result of such happy circumstances. (Because the infinitive is the "quotation" form by which new verbs are introduced during vocabulary expansion activities, it is a tempting model in the derivation of the other forms of the conjugational array. While the influence of the infinitive may be detrimental in the formation of the present tense reflexes,

in which its stem cannot always serve as a base morpheme, it is a good model to follow in the derivation of the past tense, when its stem does indeed provide the foundation in both languages to which the past tense affixes must be attached. (For example, in the past tense conjugation of the verb /dat'/ ["to give"], the past tense reflexes are: /dal/, /dali/, etc. in Russian and /dal jsem/, /dali jsme/, etc. in Czech.)

Regular formal agreement, between the two languages, of not only the base morpheme but also of the functional markers which, in turn, are utilized in an identical derivational process are three types of formal similarity whose concurrent presence creates an atmosphere conducive to the student shaping and attaching the right affixes. (There is a large subset of feminine nouns in the two lexicons which are the same in meaning, are identified by the same sound pattern ending in the affix /-a/ in the nominative case, and get morphemes identical in form attached throughout the declensional schema--with the exception of the instrumental case marker which is, nevertheless,

also formally not too different. An example are the declensional paradigms modeled by the noun /zhena/ in Russian ("woman") which has the same basic phonological pattern in Czech: /zhena/. In the total number of errors, the percentage of mistakes evident in the data with respect to the nouns of this class is much smaller than that seen in the nouns of masculine gender, where there is a much greater degree of intra- and inter-lingual diversity in the forms of the different case morphemes.)

Just as consistent inter-lingual similarity of formal means, within a given grammatical subcomponent, is an aid to the student in retrieval and reproduction, so a regular relationship of identity existing between the two languages with respect to a semantic category and its symbolic expression is helpful. While frequent trespasses may be committed where a feature of meaning is not overtly/equally distinguished in the corresponding members of a grammatical subset, the student is sheltered from errors where such a poor match between the formal and meaningful properties is replaced by a regular correspondence of substance and means. (The

feature of animateness, for example, is overtly indicated in the same way in both of the Slavic languages in the declension of singular nouns of all genders. The happy effect of such regularity is that few errors are made by students insofar as this dimension is concerned. Overt marking of the same feature follows different rules, however, in connection with plural nouns. In the first language, the plus or minus value must be reflected in the surface forms of masculine nouns in the nominative case, while nouns of the other genders are unaffected by this rule. The masculine nouns of the target code, on the other hand, need not be marked in the nominative in the plural but both they and the feminine and neuter nouns must bear the "animate" affixes in the accusative case. It is not surprising that many mistakes appear in the corpus which show what a confusing situation is created for the student by this partial and overlapping agreement and disagreement in the overt indication of a semantic criterion) One should remember that, to aggravate the student's predicament, eighty percent of the base forms are highly similar as to form and meaning. The reliance on consistent

similarity, in a fairly large and well defined sphere of structural and semantic phenomena, related by a regular correspondence of function and symbol, in the two systems (such as the singular of the nouns of all genders where the same rules apply in marking animateness), represents then yet another type of the strategies employed by the learner striving to produce grammatically acceptable utterances in the new communicative code.

Another reason for infrequent grammatical mistakes may be discerned in the student's selection of a word, phrase or process which is not different from the equivalent one in the target language, and which is the most commonly chosen out of several possible alternatives of the first language by the speakers in a given communicative situation. In such a case, the student follows the norm and transfers it to the target system. The resulting utterance may not be incorrect as to meaning and form but may give the flavor of stylistic poverty to the student's writing if, in the target code, each of the same possibilities is exploited with equal frequency, or if another one of the same con-

structions available in both languages may be given priority by the speakers in actual use. Such transfer of a favorite pattern or word is a strategy apparent in the work of even advanced students who have no trouble generating any structure of the second language--and thus have no reason to avoid it--but who, under the pressure of the rules of usage valid in the first code, simply reach in retrieval for their preferred means of expressing a given concept or thought. (This is true, for example, in the production of diminutives [Sourkova & Zajickova, ibid.]) Pragmatic interference again is at work but the effect of its influence is not bad if similarity prevails in the grammatical subcomponent involved.

Besides the consistent resemblance of structural properties and principles, and the interference of the similar and preferred elements or structures of the first language, conceptual proximity of constituents may be a further inducement to grammatical virtue. The adjective is closely associated with the noun in those languages where agreement in several semantic parameters must be signified. In the

two Slavic languages, the animateness, gender and number of a noun must be overtly reflected in the modifying adjective. The conclusion that such a strong dependency between the head and the classifying element may be behind the relatively few mistakes committed in existential sentences in which the complement is an adjective, not a noun, may be speculative. The frequent incidence of the perceptually fused sequence of an adjective and a noun, uninterrupted by a verb, (e.g. /nove auto/ ["a new car"]) is a strongly ingrained pattern in the Czech speaker's mind, however, while the same cannot be said of a combination of two nouns, linked by a zero (as they are in the existential sentence of the target system).Thus it is cognitively less of an unnatural step for the student to produce the copula-less structure if the last constituent is an adjective than it is to use two nouns or a pronoun and a noun. The strategy which allows the student to join the subject noun and a complement adjective without the link of the copula, and thus to generate a correct pattern, may be psychologically motivated and based on the greater acceptability of the ultimate association.

Conclusions based on the findings. The behavioral patterns observable in the written work of students learning a highly similar second language betray certain underlying factors which cause confusion on one hand, and arouse the confidence of the student on the other hand. The typical errors and the correct forms and sequences found in the data point to the conclusion that inconsistent resemblance in the form of functional indicators or in the context in which they appear, accompanied by a close agreement in meaning, communicative role and grammatical process, is a strong inhibitor in learning. The second major finding emerging from the evidence is the fact that there are areas common to the source and the target language delineated by consistently identical grammatical characteristics and highly similar formal means and processes. The regularity with which the symbolic signs, rules and contexts occur in such grammatical subsystems provides the student's subconscious with a haven from mistakes. An additional factor, also apparent in the corpus, is the necessary prominence of such a consistently similar subcomponent in the grammar of the target language: It must be

sufficient in size, as to the number of the category members, for it to become clearly delimited in the student's mind as a block of regularity and therefore safety. The co-existence of the potentially hazardous and the secure spheres of functioning in the grammar of the second language indicates certain directions for the strategy which might be profitably adopted by the student.

Implications for method. In a summary of the conditions present in the learning paradigm defined by similarity between two closely related languages, several points of fundamental importance become noticeable and must be taken into account in any ensuing pedagogical planning. The first consideration must be given to the psychological aspect of the learning process conditioned by the special circumstances: the relative ease the overall similarity of the lexicon, the morphological schemata and syntactic operations brings to the cognitive tasks of recognition and comprehension, as opposed to the increased difficulty in retrieval and creative production, caused by the unpredictable occurrence of dissimilar phenomena. The second major point to keep in

mind is the linguistic set-up of each of the two languages, and the fact that while there are built-in problematic areas within the target system, due to the inconsistency of the correspondence between it and the native framework, there are also extensive grammatical spheres of regular agreement, in which the high similarity of word and process is not a detriment and is, in fact, a beneficial influence in learning. What are the implications of these psychological and linguistic considerations for the methodology of teaching a language which is alike most of the time, but not always, with the mother tongue of the student?

The teacher's emphasis will have to be first on helping the student exploit the advantage given by similarity in the cognitive mode where its presence is an aid to learning: in comprehension. The second instructional objective should be the design of the two-pronged approach the student must take up to production. It should be the instructor's role to show the student how to recognize and how to be able to rely on the "safe" grammatical subsystems characterized by consistent similarity. The teacher should also be instrumental in the establishment,

by the student, of a clear and unmistakable demarcation of the sub-components in which resemblance occurs only with irregularity.

The achievement of these goals will mean an intensive exposure of the student to input from the target language; it will also mean the search for and utilization of devices that would facilitate discrimination, and remembering of the instances of similar and contrasting elements.

The best approximation to first language acquisition is learning a second language via films and television. The immediacy of TV as an information processing medium has been noted (Gattegno, 1969). In learning a second language, the student watching a video-tape is perceiving concepts and action in a direct and instantaneous assocciation with the linguistic labels. If a structural (or vocabulary building) focus is given in assignments requiring viewing of a TV program, a quick and rather dramatic improvement in competence follows. It has been my experience, both as a student and teacher, that especially when the target language is generally but inconsistently similar to the

first, television can be a valuable tool. The dialog accompanying the action gives the opportunity for recognition learning which is an easier task than learning for recall (Adams, ibid.). In processing language through comprehension, the formal aspect of the signs is provided for the student, who can begin to sort out mentally the different from the similar, and to set up idiosyncratic mediators in order to remember which is which and what the differences look like. The transfer of such insights to encoding in writing or speech must be then effected by creative language behavior, by which the student reinforces and learns to use the knowledge gained by comprehending. If the student is asked to "catch", list and use in writing several new vocabulary items during a viewing session, a better grasp of the distinctions in cognates may be observed. Also important as a contribution toward improvement in the productive mode is the task of concentrating on all the occurrences of a given contrasting (or similar) pattern (for example, prepositional phrases), writing them down, using them in a written description of content, and introducing them again

in an oral report. (I have found this technique to be highly effective, for example, in teaching Spanish speakers to choose English prepositions. The hazard inherent in the inconsistent similarity of usage between /en/ and /in/ is proverbially difficult to overcome but ceases to present itself soon after this "therapy" is begun.) The psychological "tagging" of dissimilar elements and rules may be done in written work by color-coding and graphic marking of the "gestalt" wholes which must be created between the trigger, or conditioning context, and the associated marker. (E.g. the verb and noun triggering the use of a certain preposition between them in English may be circled in red, if the same connection is different from the native language ["live on the beach"] vs. ["vivir en la playa"], and in blue, if it is the same ["live in a house"] and ["vivir en una casa"].)

The techniques suggested here are only some of the ways in which the relative ease and speed of gaining the faculty to understand a similar foreign language can be put to good use in the student's effort to achieve dexterity in writing and speaking. In facilitating

this transition, the teacher must not lose sight of the main principles to adhere to while giving guidance to the learner: First, those parts of the target grammar must be determined in which the learning may proceed in whatever ways may be found effective when normal conditions in the learning situation prevail. Second, the precarious grammatical regions affected by inconsistent similarity must be carefully identified and brought to the fore of the student's consciousness, with the separation, description and retention of the more or less contrasting symbolic means set as the final goal.

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